

MULTIMEDIA



UNIVERSITY

STUDENT ID NO

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# MULTIMEDIA UNIVERSITY

## FINAL EXAMINATION

TRIMESTER 1, 2019/2020

**LFE1017**  
**FUNDAMENTALS OF ENGLISH**  
(All groups/sections)

15 OCTOBER 2019  
9.00 am – 11.00 am  
(2 Hours)

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### INSTRUCTIONS TO STUDENTS

1. This question paper consists of **FOUR** pages with **TWO** sections.
2. Answer **ALL** questions in the Answer Booklet provided.

**SECTION A: READING [30 MARKS]**

**Instruction:** Read the passages carefully and answer ALL questions that follow.

**Interpreting Public Opinion**

1 Every political analyst agrees that some people have clear identifiable political opinions. You read about polls in a newspaper or magazine, or hear about it on television, where they discuss the public's political opinions. These polls were probably conducted over the telephone, through a telephone survey, which is the most common type of public opinion survey. When a pollster calls the public on the telephone, they answer the questions in ways that reveal those opinions. However, political analysts disagree about whether most people have political opinions. There are three schools of thought behind political analysts' disagreement about what answers to survey questions mean, and if they mean anything. 1

2 The first view holds that people have opinions, and when interviewers ask them questions, they give answers that really do reveal those opinions. This point of view does not hold that every person has an opinion on every issue, but people who do not have opinions can be screened out reasonably well by instructing them that if they do not have an opinion on a specific question to say so and not answer it. 5

3 For the most part, political researchers simply assume this point of view to be true. The researchers ask questions, and respondents, members of the public, give their opinions. However, two political scientists, Page and Shapiro (1992) have not been satisfied with the assumption that survey answers mean what they appear to mean. They formally investigated this issue and concluded that people actually do reveal real opinions when asked questions. They looked at public opinion changes from the 1930s through the 1980s and concluded that the collective policy preferences of the American public are predominantly rational, largely coherent, mostly understandable, and primarily sensible. 10

4 Another point of view has been most forcefully expressed by political scientist John Zaller (1992). He said that many people carry in their heads what he called "*considerations*" about things, issues, and politicians. Some *considerations* are positive and some are negative. When these people are asked survey questions, they are most likely to "sample" or to explore the *considerations* at the top of their head which tend to be the most recent or the easiest to retrieve. People can give wildly different responses to the same question asked twice in a short time if their mix of "*considerations*" changes or different "*considerations*" are at the top of their heads at the time the question is asked. 15

5 Zaller also said that the most politically aware people are less likely to rely on samplings of "*considerations*" because they have enough knowledge to organise their political facts reasonably. He also said the least politically aware are unlikely to sample considerations because, being unaware, they simply do not have considerations to sample. People in the middle group are the most likely to sample considerations. 20

6 Zaller asked the question, "If the public had an opinion and there was no pollster to measure it, would the public opinion exist?" Zaller then answered his own question by saying that if "by public opinion one means 25

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ordinary citizens walking around saying to themselves, 'I strongly approve of the way George Bush is doing his job as president' or 'I think we should take a stronger stand, even if it means invading North Vietnam,' then most of what gets measured as public opinion does not exist except in the **presence** of a pollster." In other words, ordinary people may have thoughts, hopes, and fears that may involve political events, but the opinions do not exist until interviewers or pollsters are there to ask them questions. 50

7 Philip Converse on the other hand has identified a third point of view. Writing in 1964, using data from the 1950s and 1960s, Converse looked at 55 two phenomena. First, when asked to explain their votes, the overwhelming majority of voters failed to give any **theoretical** reasons that could conceivably be placed on a liberal-conservative, or any other, scale. People usually speculate about political parties or personalities when asked to deliberate on their vote. In addition, many people gave very inconsistent answers to identical questions that were asked at different times. He concluded that while some people gave thoughtful answers to questions, "a mass public contains significant **proportions** of people who...offer meaningless opinions that vary randomly in direction during repeated trials over time." He said those people, who take the bigger fraction of the mass, may provide answers as if they were "*flipping a coin*." He concluded that 60 "large portions of the electorate do not have meaningful beliefs, even on issues that have formed the basis for intense political controversy among elites for substantial periods of time." Later, he referred to those opinions as "nonattitudes." 65

8 As the public, where should we **stand** on this controversy? The 70 opinion that we hold on this issue may depend on a few factors such as the validity of each school of thought. While it is acknowledged that all three points of view have validity, the arguments of Page and Shapiro seem the most convincing. Over time, answers to survey questions have repeatedly 75 revealed reasonable, mostly consistent answers. Even if all people are clueless about some things, and some people are clueless about practically everything, most people most of the time give reasonable answers to survey questions, and survey data do reveal meaningful information about people's opinions. As researchers, pollsters or analysts should know, all data should be viewed critically and answers to survey questions should not be 80 interpreted too precisely.

Adapted from: Brooker, R. G. 2003. Methods of Measuring Public Opinion. Central Washington University USA. Retrieved June 27, 2019, from <http://www.uky.edu/AS/PoliSci/Peffley/pdf/473Measuring%20Public%20Opinion.pdf>

Russell Brooker is a professor at Alverno College, Wisconsin, US. He is a Ph.D holder of Political Science from University of Chicago. He writes on a range of topics including the culture of service, ethics in business and he teaches political strategy.

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**Question I (5 marks)**

**Instructions:** Provide the meaning for each of the following words taken from the passage.

1. predominantly (line 25)
2. presence (line 49)
3. theoretical (line 56)
4. proportions (line 62)
5. stand (line 70)

**Question II (5 marks)**

**Instructions:** For each statement, write (F) if the statement is a fact and (O) if the statement is an opinion.

1. The first view holds that people have opinions, and when interviewers ask them questions, they give answers that really do reveal those opinions. (P2) \_\_\_\_\_
2. However, two political scientists, Page and Shapiro (1992) have not been satisfied with the assumption that survey answers mean what they appear to mean. (P3) \_\_\_\_\_
3. When these people (the public) are asked survey questions, they are most likely to “sample” or to explore the *considerations* at the top of their head which tend to be the most recent or the easiest to retrieve. (P4) \_\_\_\_\_
4. In other words, ordinary people may have thoughts, hopes, and fears that may involve political events, but the opinions do not exist until interviewers or pollsters are there to ask them questions. (P6) \_\_\_\_\_
5. As researchers, pollster or analysts should know, all data should be viewed critically and answers to survey questions should not be interpreted too precisely. (P8) \_\_\_\_\_

**Question III (20 marks)**

**Instructions:** Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. In your own words, state the author’s thesis statement. (2 marks)
2. Identify the author’s main purpose for writing this article and provide an evidence from the passage to justify your answer. (2 marks)
3. State the three schools of thought in interpreting public opinion. (3 marks)
4. Explain John Zaller’s thoughts on public’s “*considerations*”. (3 marks)
5. Describe what Phillip Converse meant by “*nonattitudes*”. (2 marks)

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6. What does Converse mean when he stated that some people answered questions as if they were “flipping a coin” (line 65)? (2 marks)
7. Why does the writer find the arguments made by Page and Shapiro’s that made them the most convincing? (2 marks)
8. Identify the overall tone used by the author and provide an example from the passage to justify your answer. (2 marks)
9. Does the writer show any bias? Provide evidence for your answer. (2 marks)

**SECTION B: WRITING [20 MARKS]**

**Instructions:** Choose **ONE (1)** of the topics below and write an essay of 450-500 words.

1. Many of us spend longer hours communicating via messaging applications such as Whatsapp and Telegram, compared to interacting face-to-face. How do you feel about this situation? Use specific reasons and examples to support your position.
2. When we are faced with challenges and difficult situations, we sometimes discover strengths we never knew we have. Write about a time when you recognised a new strength in yourself.

**End of Paper**